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SUBJECT: ROMANIAN PRESIDENT-ELECT TRAIAN BASESCU SETS OUT
KEY OBJECTIVES IN ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

REF: BUCHAREST 3160

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ACCORDINGLY

1. (U) Summary. In his first speech after acknowledging his win in presidential run-off elections, Romanian President-elect Traian Basescu emphasized EU integration, poverty, political influence on state institutions and corruption, all key Basescu themes in his presidential campaign. He highlighted another campaign plank - the importance of a strong trans-Atlantic alliance. Basescu also stressed that the PNL-PD should lead a parliamentary governing coalition. End Summary.

A Jubilant New President-Elect

2. (U) President-elect Traian Basescu accepted victory December 13 in a brief, nationally televised speech in which he acknowledged the concession of his competitor, center-left Social Democratic Party (PSD) PM Adrian Nastase. Flanked by senior members of his center-right Liberal-Democratic (PNL-PD) alliance bloc -- including PNL leader and potential Prime Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu -- Basescu outlined the priorities for his administration, stressing themes he had raised repeatedly throughout the campaign.

Seeking a PNL-PD led Majority

3. (U) Basescu said his first priority would be to form a parliamentary majority that would allow him to implement with "total force" Romania's plans for integration into the European Union. "We are aware that after closing negotiations, there are still extremely difficult obligations," ahead for Romania, Basescu declared. He stressed that Romania's EU accession obligations could only be implemented by a government led by the PNL-PD bloc. He stressed that the alliance had obtained 161 seats in both parliamentary chambers, while PSD without its Humanist Party (PUR) ally, had obtained only 160. Basescu said he intended to attract to the PNL-PD led coalition the parliament's "democratic parties," namely PUR and the ethnic Hungarian party (UDMR). Basescu said he will work to "unite the Romanian nation," including Romanians living abroad.

The Costs of EU Integration: Informing the People

4. (U) Turning again to EU accession, Basescu said that Romania's primary foreign policy goal is joining the EU in 2007. He said the process would surely fail if Romania's leaders do not fully explain to the Romanian people the costs and implications of integration. As long as the general public sees "Europe" as a matter of concern only for the government, fewer and fewer Romanians would support integration once the costs become clear. He underscored the need for an integration process with a "unified people who accept the costs of integration in exchange for the satisfaction that follows integration."

Combating Poverty

5. (U) Basescu said that Romania should not be allowed to "hide poverty behind statistics." He said too many pensioners receive allotments that are lower than their monthly bills for winter heating, or electricity, or gas; too many farmers become poorer and poorer even in years with good harvests; too many of Romanian youth have begun to believe that Romania is not a country where they have opportunities. He said addressing these problems would be his priority as president. He acknowledged that combating poverty would have to take into account the realities of the state budget, but stressed that the country would not achieve cohesion as long as the state "humiliates millions of citizens" through poverty.

Securing the Independence of State Institutions

6. (U) Basescu announced that he viewed as a "special priority" the need to remove state institutions from political influence. State institutions should function

according to the constitution and laws, not through the "involvement of politicians in justice, police, the prosecutors office" or other places where "serious issues concerning the legal process are dealt with." Basescu vowed to be a president who would "watch over and protect" state institutions from any kind of political influence. He cautioned that the replacement of the PSD would not simply mean the arrival of "new political masters" but that he would ask all of the leaders of Romania's institutions to fulfill their duties according to the law.

Corruption: "A threat to National Security"

17. (U) Echoing a theme he iterated during the presidential campaign, Basescu characterized high-level corruption as a "threat to national security." He promised to include the fight against corruption in Romania's National Defense Strategy. Basescu stressed that key governmental institutions, including the Justice and Interior Ministries and national intelligence agencies, would be charged with battling corruption.

The Transatlantic Relationship: Bucharest-London-Washington

18. (U) Basescu declared that strengthening Romania's security relationship with the United States and United Kingdom is the foundation of Romania's national security strategy. Harkening to a theme that he first elaborated during a nationally televised presidential debate five days before the December 12 election, Basescu praised the "Bucharest-London-Washington" alliance. Basescu described Romanian as a bridge between the western values, as represented by the EU and NATO, and former communist Eastern European states. According to Basescu, Romania should maintain friendly relationships with Russian, Ukraine and Belarus in order to help provide a "stabilizing force" on NATO's frontiers. Basescu also observed that Romania and Moldova (which share a common language, culture and history) constitute one nation living in two countries and that the "Romania has the obligation to treat Moldovans as good Romanians."

Praise from Independent Analysts

19. (U) Journalist Bogdan Ficeac lauded Basescu for his insistence that state institutions should strive to be apolitical, observing that "I haven't heard any other politician speaking so firmly about this matter." Respected NGO Pro Democracy's leader Cristian Pirvelescu said that depoliticizing state institutions depends on the "reconstruction of the lawful state," which was not respected during the PSD rule, when "state institutions were captive." He also stated that "political equilibrium leads to economic equilibrium." On the other hand, editorialist Bogdan Chirieac opined that Basescu's talk of a "Washington-London-Bucharest" had stirred uncertainty, confusion and perhaps even annoyance not only in the U.S. and UK, but also in France and Germany. (Comment: EU Ambassadors here in Bucharest have been asking the Ambassador and U.K. Ambassador Quinton Quayle for an explanation for Basescu's remarks. End Comment)

Comment

110. (SBU) Basescu's speech contained no surprises and tracked with themes he had stressed during the campaign. The speech's delivery reflected Basescu's typically up front, direct speaking style and represented an attempt to build on the momentum generated by his surprise victory December 12. Basescu spoke with a victor's confidence: his insistence on a PNL-PD-led parliamentary government clearly rejects the possibility of a governing parliamentary coalition including the PSD.

110. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website:
www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest.

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